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an obligation for the customer to fulfill in exchange for the subsidy.

36. (Amended) A method, comprising [the steps of]:

receiving information relating to customer activity with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

determining whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity;

determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

providing an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;

receiving a response to the offer; and

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

charging the customer a second price for the at least one item if the response indicates that the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

37. (Amended) A method, comprising [the steps of]:

receiving an indication of at least one item that a customer has purchased for a total price from a first vendor;

receiving contact information of the customer;

determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

providing an indication of the offer using the contact information;

receiving a response to the offer;

receiving a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account; and

crediting an amount of funds to the credit card account if the response indicates that the offer is accepted.

44. (Amended) A method, comprising [the steps of]:

receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

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determining whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity;

determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, the offer defining an obligation for the customer to fulfill in exchange for the subsidy and the offer being for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

providing an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

receiving a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account;

charging a second price to the credit card account, the second price being less than the total price;

determining whether the customer has fulfilled the obligation; and

charging a discount amount to the credit card account if the customer has not fulfilled the obligation, the discount amount being based on a difference between the total price and the second price.

49. (Amended) A method, comprising [the steps of]:

receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

providing, in response to the received information [indication], an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

receiving a response to the offer; and

providing the at least one item to the customer for free if the response indicates acceptance of the offer.

51. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

means for providing, in response to the received information, an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price; and

[means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

means for charging the customer a second price for the at least one item if the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

52. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a data storage device; and

a processor connected to the data storage device,

the data storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

receive information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

provide, in response to the received information, an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price; and

[receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

charge the customer a second price for the at least one item if the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

53. (Amended) A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method performed by a computer, the method comprising [the steps of]:

receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

providing, in response to the received information, an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price; and

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

charging the customer a second price for the at least one item if the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

54. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving information relating to customer activity with a first vendor;

means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

means for determining whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity;

means for determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

means for providing an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;

means for receiving a response to the offer; and

[means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

means for charging the customer a second price for the at least one item if the response indicates that the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

55. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a data storage device; and

a processor connected to the data storage device,

the data storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

receive information relating to customer activity with a first vendor;

receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

determine whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information

relating to customer activity;

determine an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

provide an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;
receive a response to the offer; and

[receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

charge the customer a second price for the at least one item if the response indicates that the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

56. (Amended) A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method performed by a computer, the method comprising [the steps of]:

receiving information relating to customer activity with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

determining whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity;

determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

providing an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;

receiving a response to the offer; and

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price; and]

charging the customer a second price for the at least one item if the response indicates that the offer is accepted, the second price being less than the total price.

57. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving an indication of at least one item that a customer has purchased for a total price from a first vendor;

means for receiving contact information of the customer;

means for determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

means for providing an indication of the offer using the contact information;
means for receiving a response to the offer;
means for receiving a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account;
and
means for crediting an amount of funds to the credit card account if the response indicates that the offer is accepted.

58. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a data storage device; and
a processor connected to the data storage device,
the data storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and
the processor operative with the program to:
receive an indication of at least one item that a customer has purchased for a total price from a first vendor;
receive contact information of the customer;
determine an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;
provide an indication of the offer using the contact information;
receive a response to the offer;
receive a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account; and
credit an amount of funds to the credit card account if the response indicates that the offer is accepted.

59. (Amended) A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method performed by a computer, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving an indication of at least one item that a customer has purchased for a total price from a first vendor;
receiving contact information of the customer;
determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;
providing an indication of the offer using the contact information;
receiving a response to the offer;

receiving a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account; and
crediting an amount of funds to the credit card account if the response indicates that the
offer is accepted.

69. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first
vendor;

means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase,
the at least one item having an associated total price;

means for determining whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the
information relating to customer activity;

means for determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, the offer defining an
obligation for the customer to fulfill in exchange for the subsidy and the offer being for a
reduction in price relative to the total price;

means for providing an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;
[means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase,
the at least one item having an associated total price;]

means for receiving a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account;
means for charging a second price to the credit card account, the second price being less
than the total price;

means for determining whether the customer has fulfilled the obligation; and

means for charging a discount amount to the credit card account if the customer has not
fulfilled the obligation, the discount amount being based on a difference between the total price
and the second price.

70. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a data storage device; and

a processor connected to the data storage device,

the data storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

receive information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first
vendor;

receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

determine whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity;

determine an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, the offer defining an obligation for the customer to fulfill in exchange for the subsidy;

provide an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;

[receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

receive a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account;

charge a second price to the credit card account, the second price being less than the total price;

determine whether the customer has fulfilled the obligation; and

charge a discount amount to the credit card account if the customer has not fulfilled the obligation, the discount amount being based on a difference between the total price and the second price.

71. (Amended) A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method performed by a computer, the method comprising [the steps of]:

receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

determining whether to provide an offer for a subsidy based on the information relating to customer activity;

determining an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, the offer defining an obligation for the customer to fulfill in exchange for the subsidy and the offer being for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

providing an indication of the offer for the subsidy from the second vendor;

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

receiving a credit card account identifier that identifies a credit card account;

charging a second price to the credit card account, the second price being less than the total price;

determining whether the customer has fulfilled the obligation; and

charging a discount amount to the credit card account if the customer has not fulfilled the obligation, the discount amount being based on a difference between the total price and the second price.

72. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

means for providing, in response to the received information [indication], an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

[means for receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

means for receiving a response to the offer; and

means for providing the at least one item to the customer for free if the response indicates acceptance of the offer.

73. (Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a data storage device; and

a processor connected to the data storage device,

the data storage device storing a program for controlling the processor; and

the processor operative with the program to:

receive information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

provide, in response to the received information [indication], an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a

reduction in price relative to the total price;

[receive an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

receive a response to the offer; and

provide the at least one item to the customer for free if the response indicates acceptance of the offer.

74. (Amended) A computer readable medium encoded with processing instructions for implementing a method performed by a computer, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving information relating to customer activity of a customer with a first vendor;

receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;

providing, in response to the received information [indication], an indication of an offer for a subsidy from a second vendor, wherein the offer for the subsidy is an offer for a reduction in price relative to the total price;

[receiving an indication of at least one item the customer desires to purchase, the at least one item having an associated total price;]

receiving a response to the offer; and

providing the at least one item to the customer for free if the response indicates acceptance of the offer.

Please **ADD** the following new claims.

75. The method of claim 1, wherein the act of charging the customer comprises:
charging the customer a total price; and
crediting the customer an amount so that the customer pays the second price for the at least one item.

76. The method of claim 36, wherein the act of charging the customer comprises:
charging the customer a total price; and
crediting the customer an amount so that the customer pays the second price for the at least one item.

77. The method of claim 41, wherein the act of charging a second price comprises:
charging the total price to the credit card account; and
crediting an amount to the credit card account so that a net result is a charge of the
second price for the at least one item to the credit card account.
78. The method of claim 41, wherein the act of charging a second price comprises:
charging the total price to the credit card account; and
crediting an amount to the credit card account so that a net result is a charge of the
second price for the at least one item to the credit card account.
79. The method of claim 43, wherein the act of charging a second price comprises:
charging the total price to the credit card account; and
crediting an amount to the credit card account so that a net result is a charge of the
second price for the at least one item to the credit card account.
80. The method of claim 49, wherein the act of providing the at least one item to the
customer comprises:
charging the customer the total price; and
crediting the customer an amount equal to the total price so that the customer receives
the at least one item for free.

REMARKS

Claims 1-74 were pending in the present application. Upon entry of this amendment, which is respectfully requested for the reasons set forth below, claims 1-74 will remain pending along with new claims 75-80, and claims 1, 29, 35-37, 44, 49, 51-59, and 69-74 will be amended.

Claims 29, 31, 49 and 50 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention.

Claims 2, 12, 21-23, and 31 were provisionally rejected under the judicially created doctrine of obviousness-type double patenting as being unpatentable over one or more claims of copending Application Nos. 09/219,267; 09/322,351; 09/223,903; or 09/166, 367.